

Message Text

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S/S:MR. BRIDGES

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 234221

NODIS

FOR CHARGE FROM THE SECRETARY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:PFOR, US, LE, EG

SUBJECT: MESSAGE TO FAHMY RE LEBANESE DEVELOPMENTS

A. PLEASE CONVEY THE FOLLOWING ORAL MESSAGE FROM ME TO
FONMIN FAHMY.

B. BEGIN TEXT:

I WAS MOST INTERESTED TO LEARN FROM CHARGE MATTHEWS THAT
YOU HAD RECENTLY EXPRESSED SOME CAUTIONS OPTIMISM OVER
RECENT DEVELOPMENTS ON THE LEBANESE SCENE. I AGREE THAT
THERE NOW SEEM TO BE OPPORTUNITIES FOR A TURN FOR THE BETTER
IF ALL CONCERNED IN LEBANON ACT WITH WISDOM AND FORESIGHT
AS THE TIME FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION APPROACHES. I
UNDERSTAND THAT YOU AND PRESIDENT SADAT HAVE HELD TALKS IN
THE PAST FEW DAYS WITH A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT LEBANESE
LEADERS, AND I HOULD BE INTERESTED IN WHATEVER FURTHER LIGHT
THEY HAVE SHED ON WHERE DEVELOPMENTS IN LEBANON ARE PRO-
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CEEDING. WE HOPE PRESIDENT SARKIS WILL BE A FORCE FOR UNITY

AND POLITICAL ACCOMMODATION WHEN HE ASSUMES OFFICE. HIS INAUGURATION WILL OFFER A FRESH OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL SIDES TO TAKE STOCK OF THEIR SITUATION AND TO THINK SERIOUSLY ABOUT MEANS OF REACHING A SETTLEMENT.

IN THE MEANTIME, I WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH YOU SOME OF THE MAJOR IMPRESSIONS WE GAINED OF THE CHRISTIAN POSITION IN LEBANON THROUGH THE RECENT VISIT TO CHRISTIAN-CONTROLLED LEBANON BY TWO OF OUR FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICERS.

THE CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP APPEARS GENERALLY CONFIDENT AND SHOWED LITTLE CONCERN ABOUT THEIR CAPACITIES TO DEFEND THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY. THEIR OVERWHELMING PREOCCUPATION, HOWEVER, IS THE PRESENT AND FUTURE ROLE OF THE PALESTINIANS RESIDING IN LEBANON. THE CHRISTIANS REMAIN UNWILLING TO RETURN TO THE STATUS QUO ANTE AS REGARDS THE PALESTINIAN ROLE IN THE LEBANESE STATE; THEY ARE OPPOSED TO LEAVING THE PALESTINIANS IN A POSITION TO RETAIN THE STATE-WITHIN-A-STATE STATUS OF THE PRE-WAR PERIOD OR TO PLAY A MAJOR ROLE IN INTERNAL LEBANESE POLITICAL PROCESSES AND INSIST AS A MINIMUM ON ADHERENCE TO THE CAIRO ACCORDS.

THE CHRISTIANS HAVE NOT MADE CLEAR HOW THEY INTEND TO ACHIEVE THEIR OBJECTIVE. THE PHALANGE AND SARKIS SEEM TO BE THE LEADING PROPONENTS OF AN EARLY CEASEFIRE WHICH WOULD ENABLE PEACE SETTLEMENT EFFORTS TO BE CONDUCTED IN A MORE PROPITIOUS ATMOSPHERE. THE PHALANGE IN PARTICULAR TELLS US IT INTENDS TO CONTINUE ITS EFFORTS TO PROBE THE PALESTINIANS FOR AT LEAST A LIMITED UNDERSTANDING. EVEN FOR THE PHALANGE, HOWEVER, PALESTINIAN WITHDRAWAL FROM THE METN SEEMS TO BE AN IRREDUCIBLE MINIMAL CONCESSION. EVEN THE CHRISTIANS WHO WANT A CEASEFIRE NOW ARE CONCERNED THAT THE EXTREMISTS AMONG THE PALESTINIANS WILL ULTIMATELY REJECT ANY UNDERSTANDING DEVELOPED WITH THE CHRISTIANS.

THE CHRISTIAN LEADERS GENERALLY FAVOR A RESOLUTION OF THE LEBANESE-PALESTINIAN ASPECT OF THE CONFLICT PRIOR TO A RECONCILIATION BETWEEN THE VARIOUS LEBANESE FACTIONS. THEY APPEAR CONFIDENT THAT THE PURELY LEBANESE ASPECTS OF THE CONFLICT ARE SUSCEPTIBLE TO SOLUTION. HERE AGAIN, SARKIS

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AND TO SOME EXTENT GEMAYEL ARE PREPARED TO OFFER MORE FAR-REACHING POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC REFORMS OR CONCESSIONS THAN CHAMOUN AND FRANGIE.

SARKIS SAID HE WAS DETERMINED TO WORK FOR A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT. HE EXPLICITLY ASKED THAT THE US DO EVERYTHING IT COULD TO HELP ENSURE THAT THERE WILL BE A CENTRAL AUTHORITY ON SEPTEMBER 23. WE PRESUME HE MEANT BY THIS A

CEASEFIRE OR A SITUATION THAT WOULD PERMIT THE VARIOUS LEBANESE FACTIONS TO ACCEPT HIM AS THE PIVOT AROUND WHICH THE COUNTRY COULD BE REUNITED.

IT WAS AN ACCEPTED FACT AMONG ALL THAT SARKIS WILL TAKE OVER AS PRESIDENT ON SEPTEMBER 23, BUT YOU WILL HAVE YOUR

OWN UNDERSTANDING OF THIS FROM YOUR TALKS WITH HIM.

IN GENERAL, THE CHRISTIAN LEADERS EXPRESSED HOPE THAT EGYPT AND SYRIA COULD COME TO A BETTER MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING OVER LEBANON. SOME SAID THEY WISHED THAT MODERATE STATES SUCH AS SAUDI ARABIA AND KUWAIT WOULD DISCONTINUE THEIR FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR THE PALESTINIANS. I AM SURE THAT THESE OBSERVATIONS WILL COME AS NO SURPRISE TO YOU. OUR ENVOYS MADE NO COMMENTS WHEN SUCH OBSERVATIONS WERE AIRED.

SOME OF THE CHRISTIAN LEADERS ASKED FOR MILITARY EQUIPMENT, AND WE EXPLAINED OUR POSITION THAT WE WILL CONTINUE OUR POLICY OF NOT SUPPLYING WEAPONS TO EITHER SIDE, NOR PERMITTING COMMERCIAL SALES, BUT THAT THE US WILL BE PREPARED TO PLAY ITS PART IN HELPING EQUIP A NATIONAL FORCE AFTER THE CONFLICT IS CONCLUDED.

OUR ENVOYS MADE CLEAR THAT WE CONTINUED TO SUPPORT A SOLUTION THAT WOULD PRESERVE THE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY, INDEPENDENCE, NATIONAL UNITY AND COHESION OF LEBANON. WE SAID THAT WE WERE PREPARED TO SUPPORT EFFORTS TO SEEK A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT ON THE BASIS OF THE JANUARY-FEBRUARY PRINCIPLES. WE SAID WE HAD CONSISTENTLY SUPPORTED EFFORTS TO BRING ABOUT A POLITICAL SOLUTION, AND WE WOULD BE WILLING TO BACK MOVES IN LEBANON TO BRING THE FIGHTING TO AN END AND NEGOTIATE A SETTLEMENT.

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WE TOLD THE CHRISTIANS THAT WE WOULD BE PREPARED TO SEND BACK FROM TIME TO TIME REPRESENTATIVES TO TALK TO THE CHRISTIAN LEADERS UNTIL SUCH TIME AS SECURITY CONDITIONS MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR OUR EMBASSY IN WEST BEIRUT TO RE-ESTABLISH NORMAL CONTACTS. WE TOLD SARKIS THAT WE WOULD BE PLEASED TO RECEIVE IN WASHINGTON A PERSONAL ENVOY FROM HIM AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AFTER HIS INAUGURATION.

I WILL LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU LATER THIS MONTH, AT WHICH TIME I HOPE WE WILL BE ABLE TO DISCUSS IN GREATER DETAIL THESE AND OTHER ISSUES OF INTEREST TO US BOTH, AND IN PARTICULAR THE QUESTION OF HOW THEY BEAR ON OUR PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVE OF GENERATING FURTHER MOVEMENT TOWARD AN OVERALL PEACE SETTLEMENT IN THE AREA. WARM REGARDS.

END TEXT. ROBINSON

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NNN

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